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RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1379  
RHMFIISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3676  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 NEW DELHI 004605

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STATE FOR INR/B

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/18/2016

TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER PINR KNNP IN

SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHIC NOTES: MEA ADDITIONAL SECRETARY KC SINGH

REF: A. NEW DELHI 3611

1B. 05 NEW DELHI 9421  
1C. 05 NEW DELHI 8782

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Classified By: DCM Robert Blake, Jr. for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

11. (C) Summary: Additional Secretary (International Organizations) KC Singh's position combines several large MEA portfolios of USG interest, including the UN, nonproliferation, and counterterrorism. USG interlocutors over the past several months have had opportunities to interact with Singh in several of his avatars. This message provides some initial impressions of and biographic notes for this seasoned Indian diplomat, including information he has shared with us (in both Delhi and Washington) regarding some of his previous postings. End Summary.

An Integrated Approach to CT

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12. (C) Singh has told us he favors an integrated approach to combating terrorism vice a solely law enforcement or military approach. For example, in the April 19 Counterterrorism Joint Working Group (CTJWG, reported Septel), he advanced his opinion that "tough policing" alone failed to curb the Punjab militancy of the 1980s-90s, which was successfully defeated only by "good cops and an active Chief Minister."

¶3. (C) Singh has vigorously discussed with USA diplomats how best to counter extremist Islamist demagogues; he favors providing public and Internet fora for moderate Muslim scholars and advocates (whom he said lack the funding that accrues to extremists) to counter extremist messages "from within the community." He believes Washington's (and Delhi's) hand behind such efforts should be hidden, however, to avoid the messenger outweighing the message. Singh bemoaned the passing of respected moderate voices such as Jordan's King Hussein, and the lack of credible replacements.

The ideal messages would have to come from respected Islamic scholars and religious leaders, but, for example, Egyptian imams are largely regarded as President Mubarak's mouthpieces and thus discredited, he argued.

¶4. (C) Singh supports joint US-India inter-agency efforts to track and freeze terrorist funds and materiel, for example to the Sri Lankan LTTE (Ref A). He has also frequently lobbied for the need to share terrorism-related information, training, and methodologies -- not only in accepting USG assistance, but also offering to the USG GOI training in some of their areas of strength (such as counter-insurgency training and jungle warfare expertise, Ref A).

CT Cooperation is Personal ...

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¶5. (C) Singh, unlike his predecessor, appears fully attuned to the new, collaborative dynamic of US-India CT relations. Also unlike his predecessor, the CT function of his position is as much a personal as a professional matter. Singh recounted at the CTJWG that he was India's Ambassador to the UAE during the December 1999 hijacking of flight IC-814 to Kandahar (Ref C and previous). Abu Dhabi was "not interested in talking to me until the US Ambassador raised the Crown

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Prince on his mobile phone," after which "the (UAE) government started returning my calls," he reported. However, despite this obvious personal interest in IC-814, Singh has not asked us for additional information on the hijackers to support the Indian court case against them, as did (repeatedly) his predecessor.

... and Professional

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¶6. (C) Unlike many of his South Block colleagues, Singh is results-driven. He is not shy about cutting off a subordinate who is belaboring an issue if he feels he is losing his audience's attention. Several times during the CTJWG Singh told GOI briefers to "speed it up," "skip the details," and "arrange to pass the information later."

¶7. (C) Singh's past posting as Joint Secretary (Consular, Passports, Visas) gave him first-hand experience with a subset of important bilateral CT issues, including document authentication and extraditions. He remarked on his familiarity with these issues during the CTJWG and in subsequent CT-related conversations.

Hawkish on Pakistan (as Expected)

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¶8. (C) As would be expected for an Indian diplomat whose mandate includes counter-terrorism, Singh is hawkish on Pakistan. His remarks on Islamabad during the CTJWG were largely tempered and even-handed -- in the vein of "we must keep our eye on the ball" and "Pakistan is not seized on ending cross-border terrorism" -- but in other interactions aspects of a more typical South Block attitude emerged. For example, in a follow-on meeting with the DCM, Singh asserted that Pakistan's ISI and al-Qa'ida maintain an ongoing relationship -- an allegation that did not surface during the CTJWG.

¶9. (C) That said, Singh voices a softer line as the GOI interlocutor with Pakistan on nuclear confidence-building measures, an important element of the Indo-Pak Composite Dialogue. (NOTE: The counter-proliferation aspect of his mandate includes nuclear-risk reduction talks with Pakistan and also places him at the table for the US-India civil nuclear talks. End Note.) Giving us a read-out of the April 26-27 negotiations on nuclear and conventional confidence-building measures (CBMs) in Islamabad, he cautioned us "not to make Pakistan feel cornered, and asserted that the "problem is when Pakistan hyphenates" the relationship.

Made Little Impression with Other Missions

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¶10. (C) Singh's comfort with USG counterparts may not extend to other nations or to the nonproliferation portfolio. Singh made little impression during a series of civil nuclear-related meetings with the Japanese, Australians, and Nuclear Suppliers Group in early May 2006, and preferred to give the floor to the reticent Joint Secretary (Disarmament and International Security) Hamid Ali Rao. It appears that Singh has had little, if any, involvement in any of the civil

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nuclear cooperation initiative discussions, his mandate notwithstanding.

Insights into Iranian Thinking

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¶11. (C) Singh was India's Ambassador to Tehran during recent stages of Delhi's expansion of strategic and energy cooperation with Iran. He has shared with us insights he gleaned during his tenure there, for example:

-- His assessment that President Ahmadinejad is proving to be more radical and irrational than the world initially believed.

-- That Iran's nuclear program is "propelled by paranoia," and that fear is enhanced by the US presence in Afghanistan and Iraq.

-- Ahmadinejad's belligerence toward the US resonates in Iran because in the "Shia mind" threats from Washington recall the betrayal of Hassan and Hussein in the seventh century. In response to perceived threats, the "Persian mentality" resorts to a martyr mode, and Iran's leaders would favor provoking confrontation under this influence instead of rationally turning away.

-- For more on Singh's experience and thinking regarding Iran, see Ref B.

Witty Interlocutor

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¶12. (C) Singh's candor and witty turn-of-the-phrase is a breath of fresh air for the MEA. For example:

-- On Pakistan: "They have always treated themselves as the foreign concubine of the US."

-- On finding new, moderate Muslim spokespeople, he quickly ruled out The Saudi Royal Family: "Well, they are each about 120 years old."

-- He described the imbalance of democracies trying effectively to combat terrorism: "We are boxing with one hand tied behind our backs," while "terror feeds on blood."

-- On India's strategic planning vis-a-vis Pakistan: ""India has maintained minimal credible deterrence, not maximal incredible deterrence."

Can Patronize

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¶13. (C) Singh is a cordial, professional, and enthusiastic interlocutor. However, he is not entirely above the patronizing tone we hear more often from other South Block interlocutors. In the CTJWG, for example, he stated that "we were warning you about Islamic terrorism for years, but better late than never."

Bio Notes

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¶14. (SBU) Singh is a Punjabi Sikh, born May 30, 1948. He speaks English, Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi, and knows some Arabic. An articulate and polished speaker, Singh holds a master's degree in English literature and an LL.B. degree. His MEA curriculum vitae is as follows:

1974: Joined the Indian Foreign Service  
1976-78: Second Secretary, Indian Embassy, Cairo  
1978-80: Regional Passport Officer, Chandigarh  
1980-83: Consul, Indian Consulate General, New York  
1983-87: Deputy Secretary, Office of President of India Giani Zail Singh  
1987-89: First Secretary/Counselor, Indian Embassy, Ankara  
1989-92: Director (Administration), MEA  
1992-96: Joint Secretary/Administration, Establishment and External Publicity (MEA Spokesperson)  
1996-1998: Joint Secretary/Consular, Passport and Visa (CPV) Division  
1999-2003: Ambassador to the UAE  
2003-2005: Ambassador to Iran  
Nov 2005 - Current: Additional Secretary (International Organizations)

Comment: The Right Man in the Right Job at the Right Time

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¶15. (C) Singh's portfolio is one of many at MEA that can often go to a senior diplomat who is biding time between ambassadorial postings. In KC Singh, we have an interlocutor who is seized not only of counterterrorism, but also of cooperation and creative approaches, and who is keenly aware that combating terrorism effectively means bringing many actors to the table and leaning forward on both giving and accepting assistance. Had he emerged in this position ten (or even five) years ago, with US-India relations as they were, his would not have been successful in channeling his energy and drive into fruitful US-India CT cooperation. We should make an effort to involve him more in the civil nuclear cooperation, where his fresh insight and flexibility could moderate the more rigid positions of India's nuclear establishment. KC Singh is, in this venue, the right man in the right job at the right time; we can only hope his posting is not ephemeral.

¶16. (U) Visit New Delhi's Classified Website:  
(<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/sa/newdelhi/>)

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